

John Pope to Andrew Jackson, February 19, 1829, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

JOHN POPE TO JACKSON.1

1 John Pope was a senator from Kentucky 1807–1813. In 1829 Jackson made him governor of Arkansas, in which place he served until 1835.

Frankfort, Ky. , February 19, 1829.

D'r Sir, I have just returned from Louisville where I learnt from our friend Worden Pope your enquiry as to my disposition to take a seat in the national Judiciary. The Jackson members of both houses of our general assembly almost unanimously had a few days before forwarded to you at Washington City an address pressing me on your consideration for the office of attorney Genl. A few of our parti[c]ular friends at Louisville had a private conference on the subject and all concurred that the office of Judge would be most advantageous to me but most of them believed that as regarded the party and the effect on the course here and in the west generally the office of atto general ought to be preferred and I was strongly inclined to this opinion; but our friend Worden Pope and another friend dissented and he has made known his view of the subject to you. He is a sincere and disinterested friend of ours and his opinion is entitled to high regard. I gave my opinion with the reasons for it in two letters to your friend Judge White of the Senate with a request, that he would submit them to your perusal. It is gratifying to me to believe that I have a place in your friendship and confidence. Your better judgment upon a view of the whole ground will settle the question and I will cheerfully accept whatever situation your partiality may assign me. I have never before solicited an office from the executive of the state or the nation nor would I now obtrude myself upon your notice

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but for some late indications of your regard and confidence and a conviction that some distinguishing evidence of it is necessary to my political advancement and that it will add much to my power and influence to sustain your administration and our party in the west. I will not affect indifference to your favour because upon you my political fate and prospects depend. I hope you will excuse the solicitude of one who has had to encounter opposition at every step of his political march—a public and decisive evidence of your confidence will lessen to a great extent the difficulties in my way—our friends in congress from kentucky at an early period of the session were for presenting me to you for a place in the Cabinet but I now understand that by some magic influence they have abandoned their first plan and that amos kendall and these gentlemen have made some other arrangement, that I am to be excluded and my family satisfied with some small offices, and my friend Duff Green, who was pressing me all last year to permit Colo Johnson to be reelected² and to look to some high station under your administration after I have yielded to Barry Johnson Bibb etc what they were under the highest obligations to concede to me, writes that it is doubtful whether I can be promoted because I did not have Colo Johnson elected and voted for the confirmation of Judge Robinson. whether this little fry of managers at washington shall control my fate in defiance of the will and judgment of the President and that of near seventy members of our General assembly and the will of the people of kentucky is for you to decide. I have neither the motive or disposition to indulge bad feelings towards our members from kentucky. I have fought the good fight with them in the great struggle in which we have been associated and have certainly given them no cause of complaint. I am at home and have no means of counteracting the artful machinations against me at washington. I suspect some invisible hand has been operating on these men. It may be that political aspirants of

2 Richard M. Johnson, senator from Kentucky 1820–1829; was succeeded in 1829 by George M. Bibb.

other states imagine that I will not subserve their objects of ambition. our friends here who have been eyewitnesses of my public conduct here are entitled to be heard in my favour

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in preference to mr kendall who went from here in december my warm friend and the members of congress if they have changed their opinions since the commencement of the session. Give to my exertions in the common cause my talents and reputed integrity a due estimate and award me what your judgment approves. Be assured I would not consent that you should sacrifice the public good to gratify me or advance my interest. In my letters to Judge white who I have ever understood had your good opinion and a considerable share of your confidence I mentioned the name of mr van Burin of new york not with reference to his merits or demerits but to effect on that state. I had no preference for him over other distinguished men on the list of your friends. I have no personal acquaintance with that gentleman and his public career has not furnished sufficient data to enable me to form a satisfactory opinion of his pretensions to public consideration as a statesman and patriot. I regret that I cannot have a personal interview with you on the commencement of your administration. You will not I know doubt my sincerity when I assure you that no man feels more solicitude for the success of your administration and that it may furnish additional evidence of elevated patriotism and devotion to the prosperity and glory of your Country. I have a special desire to converse with you on the subject of removals from the subordinate offices of the government. It is one of peculiar delicacy difficulty and embarrassment and demands a calm and dispassionate consideration uninfluenced by the host now pressing you for places from every quarter of the union. In this business pardon me for suggesting that you should proceed with caution and the process should be gradual. A too sudden and violent shock ought not to be given to public feeling and sentiment. Remember that the hope of office will secure you more support than the enjoyment of it. By the removal of a good officer of character you not only array him and his friends against you but a portion of the disinterested part of the community and if you secure the man substituted you offend twenty or more disappointed expectants. As regards yourself and the strength and stability of your administration it is a losing game unless managed with consummate skill and judgment and yet to a certain extent it must and ought to be done and especially where influential political men hold office which afford them power to annoy you and your friends. Pardon my freedom in making these

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remarks which are merely intended to guard you against the importunities of members of congress and others who are more engrossed with their little selfish and electioneering projects than zeal for your fame or the success of your administration. You should bear in mind that a large portion of the members of congress have less moral weight and political influence than many of their constituents—such I know to be the case in relation to the members from kentucky—most of them have good managing electioneering sense and local popularity but none have extensive weight and influence in the state—not more than one in twenty probably in one hundred are office holders or office hunters, and you have been placed in power not by the aspiring politicians and busy partisans but by the affections and confidence of the great body of the people who feel no other concern than that the government may be administered by the man of their choice and upon just and honest principles. Elevated like Washington by the will of the nation rather than party for your patriotism and distinguished public services you should look to the moral force and sound intelligence of the country for support and not to the mere creatures of party. The sound sense and intelligence of the people is the only rock upon which a great public man can build a lasting fame, every other foundation is temporary and evanescent. Policy however requires him to be mindful to a certain extent of mere partizans and while on this subject permit me to call your attention to one here Wm T. Barry Esqr who deserves nothing from me and but little from you. He and his friends have lost us the state administration and had nearly lost you the state. He is not fit for any station which requires great intellectual force or moral firmness but he is a gentleman in his deportment and amiable in his private relations. He is nearly insolvent and has the sympathies of many of the new Court men and is more a favourite with them than any other. They want something done for him and as a measure of policy I would gratify them to a reasonable extent—give him the attorneyship for this District if vacant or make him governor of arkansa and public sentiment might bear his being sent to some of the south american states. Of our senators I will say nothing—you know them. Dick Johnson and his family connections I like generally, although very wild and violent occasionally in politics they are warm hearted and efficient. Governor metcalf and some other of Clays friends are I think

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endeavoring to separate them from your other friends here. Let me advise you to treat old Dick and his brother John I. Johnson who voted for you with kindness and attention. Henry Daniel is a bold efficient man in his quarter. Thomas P Moore is an efficient man of sense and management and although he has not much moral weight and has not done for you one tenth part of what is pretended, yet he has fought the battle with zeal and boldness. He regards neither truth no[r] principle to carry his point, as a matter of policy I advise you to treat him as well as you can, but dont give him too much influence with you. Charles Wickliffe has done his duty. He is a cool calculating man to whom I stand indifferent. Chilton shoots at random now and then but has good popular talents. Of the rest of our delegation it is unnecessary to speak. It will be well if they can be elected and vote with you. I fear that our members in relation to me may be influenced by ambitious men from other states. In this I may be mistaken. I am sorry to send this letter in my own hand writing as it may give you more trouble to read it than it is worth. Please to consider it a substitute for a free confidential conversation and when you have read it I would prefer that you should commit it to the flames. Permit me to tender to you assurances of my respect and sincere regard.

[*Indorsement in Jackson's handwriting* :] confidential, to be preserved carefully. . . . to be filed with my *private* papers.